



VINCENT HERRING

ENDS AND MEANS

Jeremy Pelt
Danny Grissett
Essiet Essiet
Joris Dudli

HIGHNOTE
RECORDING
HCD 7149

1. **Ends And Means** 7:55

(R. Chicco) SAZAS

2. **Tom Tom** 8:27

(J. Dudli) AKM

3. **The Song Is Ended** 6:26

(I. Berlin) (Irving Berlin Music) ASCAP

4. **Stable Mates** 5:58

(B. Golson) (Time Step Music) ASCAP

5. **Norwegian Wood** 5:43

(J. Lennon / P. McCartney) (SONY/ATV Tunes LLC/Beatles) ASCAP

6. **Wingspan** 5:14

(M. Miller) (Mulgrew Publishing) BMI

7. **Thoughts** 5:36

(J. Dudli) AKM

8. **Caravan** 11:27

(E. Ellington / J. Tizol) (EMI Mills Music / Famous Music Corp.) BMI

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VINCENT HERRING alto/soprano saxophone

JEREMY PELT trumpet (tracks 3, 6, 7 & 8)

DANNY GRISSETT piano

ESSIET ESSIET bass

JORIS DUDLI drums

Jeremy Pelt appears courtesy of MAXJAZZ

Produced by Vincent Herring

Executive producer: Joe Fields

Engineered by Manfred Knoop

Recorded at Knoop Music, River Edge, NJ, June, 2005

Photography/Concept by: Gene Martin

Design: Brad Wrolstad

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VINCENT HERRING ENDS AND MEANS

Taking stock of Vincent Herring's stint with HighNote Records, now entering its sixth year, we have several things to celebrate: the 41-year-old's dedication to the working-band ideal; his authoritative position as a peer among living greats and a groomer of new talent; and of course his worldly-wise horn, bluesy and resolute from the first notes of his 2001 HighNote debut, **Simple Pleasure** (HCD 7084). Ten albums, mainly for the Musicmasters and Landmark labels, preceded that one. And Herring's sideman credits, with Cedar Walton, Nat Adderley, Buster Williams, Kenny Barron and many others, have long established him as one of the leading alto and soprano players of his generation.

On **Simple Pleasure** and the two HighNote discs that followed (**All Too Real** [HCD 7106] and **Mr. Wizard** [HCD 7121]), Herring stuck with his youthful "Brooklyn" rhythm section, bassist Richie Goods and drummer E. J. Strickland. The first effort featured Herring's contemporaries, trumpeter Wallace Roney and pianist Mulgrew Miller. The next spotlighted pianist Anthony Wonsey and a notable young contender on trumpet, Jeremy Pelt. On 2004's **Mr. Wizard**, Pelt reappeared and the remarkable pianist Danny Grissett made his recording debut. Then, in a quick but memorable detour, Herring matched wits with the formidable tenor saxophonist Eric

Alexander on **The Battle** (HCD 7137), recorded live at New York's Smoke in early April 2005.

Ends and Means augments this already outstanding body of work. We hear Herring, Pelt and Grissett together again. But also, for the first time on record, we hear Herring's "European" rhythm section, with the venerable bassist Essiet Essiet and the Swiss-born, Vienna-based drummer Joris Dudli. "This has been a working band for the past couple of years, but only in Europe," Herring explains, adding that he came to know Dudli while the drummer was headquartered in New York. "Joris worked with Art Farmer, and was one of those few European guys at the time who played with a certain American flair and confidence. We had a certain vibe... Songs have been developing and we've been communicating with audiences differently. It evolved naturally and we wanted to document that."

Dudli was eager to bring Essiet into the fold, although this bassist was certainly no stranger to Herring. "I think our first gig together was with Dollar Brand, years and years ago," Herring says. "Essiet fit right in, in every kind of way. And he's in tune with influences outside of jazz." Danny Grissett is new on the scene but growing in stature with each passing month. Technically gifted and

spiritually forceful, he is also an asset as a composer and arranger (two of his pieces made it onto **Mr. Wizard**). Jeremy Pelt, who played on two **All Too Real** tracks and three from **Mr. Wizard**, steps forward on four this time. "If we ever decide to go to a quintet, Jeremy will be the guy we call," Herring assures.

The two Dudli compositions herein, "Tom Tom" and "Thoughts," bring an element of funk to the session, but both include taut, swinging releases as well. This approach extends to the spacious "Caravan" and even the harmonically involved "Stable Mates." Herring recalls interpreting the Benny Golson classic in a similar "groove" vein while playing on the streets in the early 1980s. But the Ellington arrangement he credits to Richie Goods, who conceived the bass line on a whim after Herring called the tune on a gig. The creative fuel here is simply lived experience, rich in its rewards.

"Ends and Means," a bright chart by the pianist and former Herring sideman Renato Chicco, leads off the program. Herring's alto soars on the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood," adapted from an arrangement he once played with the German saxophonist Johannes Enders. These takes find Grissett at his refined and hard-charging best. And

Grissett's arrangement of Irving Berlin's "The Song Is Ended," with its dark harmonic colors, launches Pelt on a characteristically inquiring journey. Mulgrew Miller's "Wingspan," the challenging neo-bop anthem (which gave Miller's flagship ensemble its name), is perhaps the jewel in the crown. Herring and Pelt take hold of the tempo and don't let go.

As can be said of his previous HighNote releases, **Ends And Means** brims with fire and feeling. It is expertly carried off, but more than just "professional." In the music's finer details, you'll hear Herring and his cohorts push the music forward and renew its purpose—by accident, by design and sometimes both at once. On "Caravan" (to take just one example), Dudli and Herring's interplay on the last A of the first alto chorus and the first two A's of the second chorus can be fairly described as hair-raising. Deeply human exchanges like these make Herring's albums the kind that age well, that never stop mattering.

— David Adler
David Adler writes for Jazz Times, The New Republic and other publications.